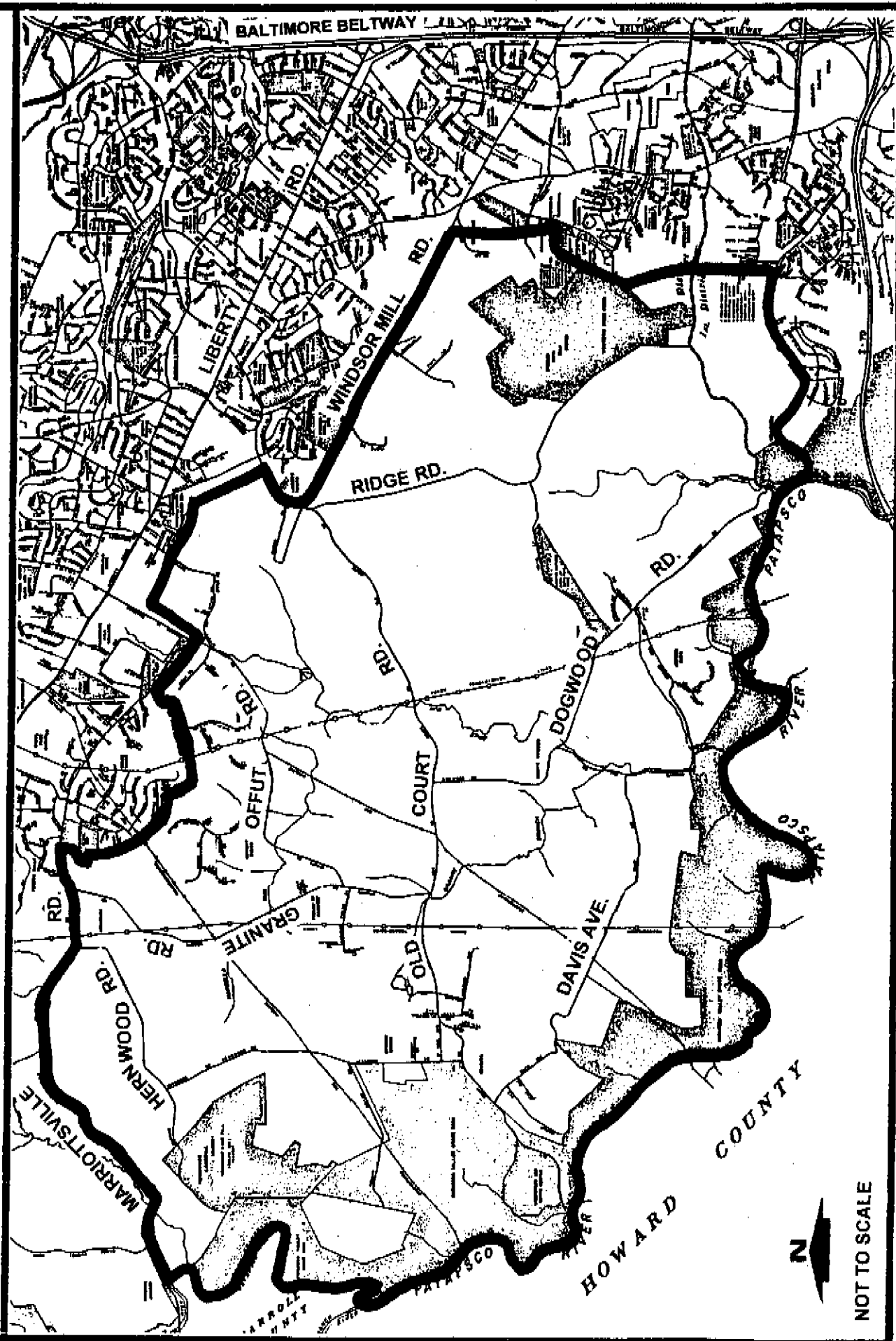


Patapsco / Granite Area Community Plan

Map of Boundaries of Study Area



PATAPSCO/GRANITE AREA COMMUNITY PLAN

DESCRIPTION OF PLAN AREA

The Patapsco/Granite Community Plan area contains approximately 18.71 square miles or 11,979 acres. It comprises 17 percent of the 110 square miles in the Western Sector of the county, as designated in the Baltimore County Master Plan 1989 - 2000.

The plan area is located outside the Urban Rural Demarcation Line (URDL), and is served by private well and septic systems. The plan area boundaries are as follows: Windsor Mill Road following the URDL to Marriottsville Road on the north, the Patapsco River on the west and south to Johnnycake Road, also on the south and lastly to the vicinity of Fairbrook Road and following the URDL on the east.
(See Map A.)

The Patapsco River Valley and its streams such as Ben's Run, Brice's Run and Dogwood Run have shaped the land form of the area. There is a great diversity in the area's geography and topography from its gently rolling farm fields to its steep slopes and forested stream valleys with their rugged beauty. The old rural quarry community of Granite, a National Register Historic District, is the area's rural village and a centerpiece for the community.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to evaluate the Patapsco/Granite area in light of development pressures and recent land use/zoning decisions. There is the need to balance reasonable rural growth opportunities with the preservation of the area's unique rural character and quality of life. The winding nature of the rural roads, the moderate to severe environmental constraints of the major streams, 100 year flood plains, stream buffers, steep slopes and soils with limitations for septic drainfields impose serious impediments for rural development. The plan will examine the current land use and zoning classifications and make recommendations for changes that are better suited to the environmental constraints of the area. Alternative rural development patterns such as rural hamlets, which allow for development yet establish conservancy areas preserving open space will be explored. Design guidelines for rural development will be discussed.

The following summary of the vision statement adopted by the Greater Patapsco Community Association, aptly describes the hopes and aspirations of Granite's residents for its future. The complete vision statement is found in Appendix A.

"The greater community of Granite sees itself as a picturesque, rural community. We enjoy our scenic views, we take advantage of a bountiful nature for hiking, biking, hunting and just plain gazing. We appreciate the fact that in our midst we have farms, a lumber mill, and a nursery products business. We are proud of our historic district and its antique store. Retirees, housewives and those who work in factories, offices, whatever, like to say: 'I live in the Granite area.'

Many, perhaps most, of our citizens would like to retain the community's present character and severely restrict future growth. There is general recognition, however, that 'we can't build a wall around ourselves and keep others out.' This sense of realism undergirds the community's support for moderate, well-planned development and growth. The support for such moderation is shared, by and large, even by landowners who wish to develop their properties and have applied for upzoning to do so.

In summary, our vision for the greater Granite community involves the continued protection of scenic vistas, the environment and our rural way of life, with an emphasis on agricultural preservation. At the same time, we recognize the need for some population expansion into our area. Our community leaders are willing to work with developers and county authorities in an effort to plan development that will have minimum negative impact on the quality of life currently enjoyed by our residents, and provide a welcoming environment for newcomers."

PLAN PROCESS

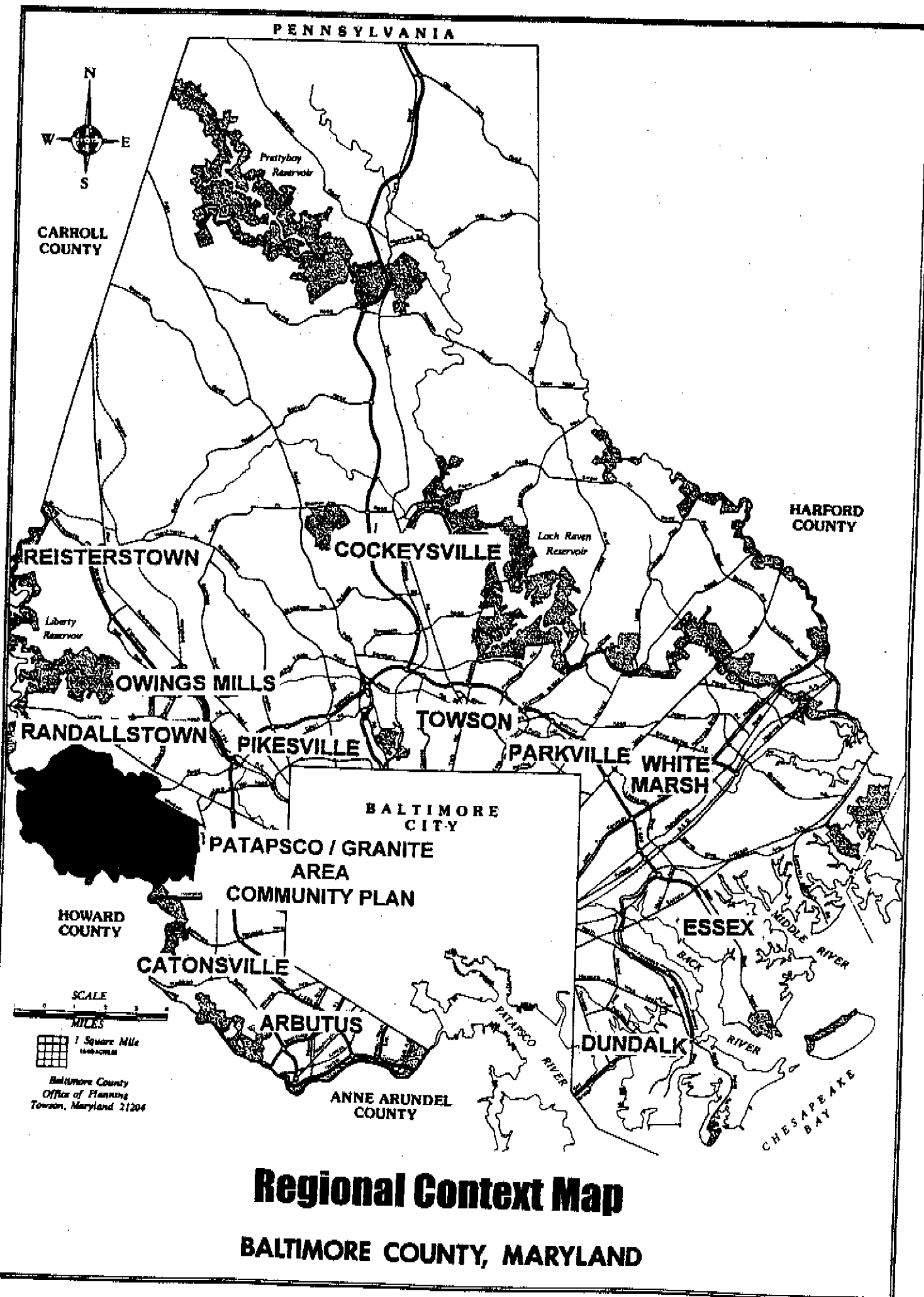
Councilmen Kevin Kamenetz and S.G. Samuel Moxley sponsored a Baltimore County Council Resolution No. 116-96, adopted by the County Council on December 16, 1996. It requested that the Baltimore County Planning Board prepare a community plan for the Western sector areas in the First and Second Councilmanic Districts which are zoned Resource Conservation.

Planning staff in conjunction with a citizen's advisory group comprised of residents, major property and business owners in the area began the planning effort in January 1997. Meetings were held over the course of the next five months. This draft document was reviewed by the advisory group as well as all community associations within the plan area. An open meeting was held in Winter 1998, after which the draft plan was formally submitted to the county administration which distributed it to county and state agencies for review and comment. The Baltimore County Planning Board, upon receipt of the draft plan, scheduled a public hearing. Upon adoption, the plan was forwarded to the County Council for their review, public hearing and adoption as an amendment to the Master Plan.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The study area is within the Western Sector of the Baltimore County Master Plan 1989-2000 with indirect access to major transportation systems, i.e. US 29 and I-70. The Patapsco/Granite area is located at the western edge of Baltimore County, with Howard and Carroll Counties to the south and west, Wards Chapel and Chapeldale/Holbrook to the north, Randallstown to the north and east, and Woodlawn to the east. These important neighboring areas affect the Patapsco/Granite area. (See Map 2A.)

The 2010 Howard County General Plan has designated the Woodstock area, immediately adjacent to the Patapsco/Granite area, as a mixed use area. In 1995, a planned unit development, Waverly Woods, was approved for a golf course, 1,125,200 square feet of office and commercial



uses, 856 - 1018 single family dwellings, townhouses and condominium/garden apartments on 682 acres. Currently under construction as a phased development with an estimated completion date of 2010, it is located on Old Frederick Road (Route 99), about one and one quarter miles from the Baltimore County boundary.

While the Patapsco River is a physical and geographic boundary between the counties, Old Court Road connects Baltimore and Howard Counties and serves as a major collector road, one of the best east-west routes in the area. It allows commuters to travel from Carroll and Howard Counties to Randallstown, Pikesville, Woodlawn and other points east. While traffic studies conducted in conjunction with the Waverly Woods development indicate that most new traffic will utilize the interstate system, I-70 and MD 32, it is likely that shopping and job opportunities in Baltimore County will generate an increase in traffic on Old Court Road through the Patapsco/Granite area.

The Wards Chapel and Holbrook/Chapeldale communities are older rural communities located to the north of Marriottsville Road between the Liberty Reservoir and Holbrook Road area. The RC 2 zoning in the former community assures that development will be extremely limited while the RC 5 zoning in the latter will allow rural residential development to occur.

As for the area to the north and east, Randallstown offers shopping opportunities along the Liberty Road commercial corridor, a major medical institution, the Northwest Medical Center, and medium to high density residential neighborhoods, designated as Community Conservation areas in the Master Plan 1989-2000. Lastly, Woodlawn, to the east and south is a regional commercial and major employment center and contains medium to high density residential neighborhoods along Rolling Road. The Rutherford Business Park, Windsor Corporate Park, Social Security Administration and the Health Care Financing Administration are major generators of jobs within the area. Dogwood Road, Ridge Road as well as Old Court Road are utilized by commuters enroute to Woodlawn from the west.

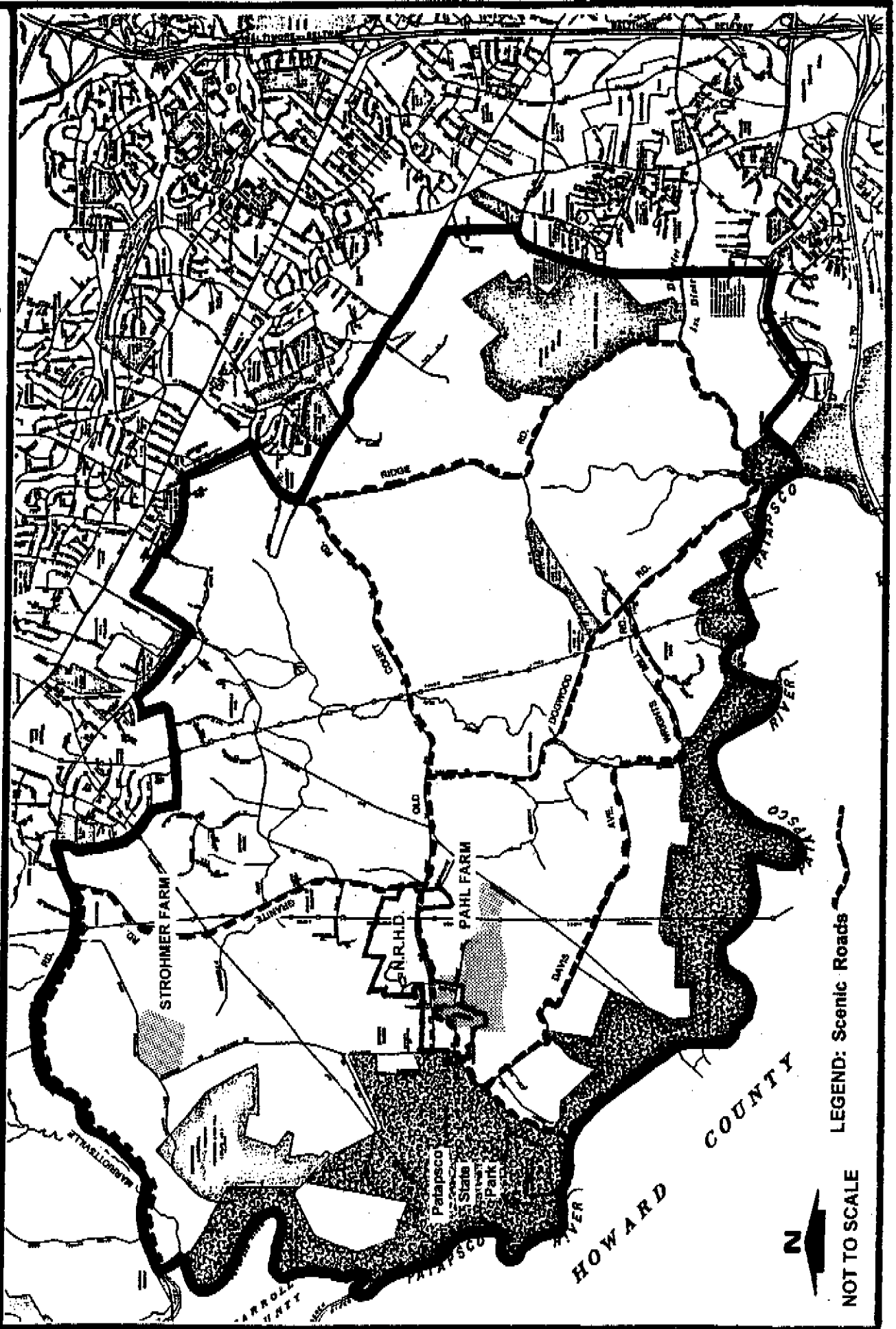
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

In 1994, a National Register Historical District (NRHD) was approved within the heart of the old rural quarrying community from which the name Granite was given. The District contains approximately 300 acres located along Old Court Road and several side streets including St. Paul Avenue, Melrose Avenue, Hornwood Road, Bunker Hill Road and Sylvan Dell Lane. The 62 properties within the District form a cohesive group of historic resources and represent the period from settlement around 1750 through the early 20th century. Primarily residential houses and outbuildings, they also include an Odd Fellows social hall, the St. Paul's Methodist Church (now the Missionary Baptist Church), the Granite Presbyterian Church, former commercial buildings and the Granite Public school (now an antique shop). There is a high level of integrity within the District as a result of few intrusions upon the basic form and character of the buildings. (See Map 3 A.)

According to Peter Kurtze, architectural historian, the District achieved its present form during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth century at a time when the granite quarrying operations were at their peak. There were two significant

Patapsco / Granite Area Community Plan

Historic, Cultural and Natural Resources Map



quarries, Fox Rock and Waltersville. In fact, the area was originally named Waltersville after the prominent local family's quarry. Stone quarried in the area was used in the construction of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad including the multiple arched Thomas Viaduct. The Baltimore City Courthouse, Customs House and Post Office, the Baltimore County Courthouse, the Randallstown Elementary School, the Library of Congress, the old Treasury building in Washington, D.C. were all constructed from local granite. Granite, as a building material, can be widely found throughout the Granite NHRD District in foundations, the church and school, as well as in cemetery monuments, walls and gateposts.

There is an extensive number of historic buildings and sites that have the potential for listing on an individual basis as Baltimore County Landmarks on the Preliminary or Final Landmarks list. (See Appendix B for a list.) There is also the possibility of creating a satellite District for a significant cluster of historic resources that are fundamental to the character of the area, without which the area would be altered irreparably. A historic preservation master plan is needed as is a strategy for an in-depth evaluation of the historic resources and a priority list for historic preservation. The Granite Historical Society working in conjunction with the Greater Patapsco Community Association, property owners and the county's architectural historian, John McGrain should develop this plan and strategy.

Lastly, the Granite NRHD must be preserved; no development should encroach upon the ambiance of the District. A buffer should be provided between the District and any new development. For additional information, see Rural Design Guidelines section of the plan.

AGRICULTURAL PRESERVATION

The Patapsco/Granite area has a rich agricultural history dating from 1720. The fertile Patapsco Valley was home to all types of farming operations long before the quarrying began in the early 1800's. Today, the area is characterized by rolling hills, farm and pasture land and wooded stream valleys. Throughout the area there are small scattered patches of prime and productive soils; however the productivity of the farms is quite high. There is much opportunity for continued farming, especially in vegetable and specialty farms.

Baltimore County participates in two statewide programs designed to preserve agriculture and open space through the purchase of easements by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) and the donation of easements to the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET). In order to compliment these existing programs, a community based land trust should be formed to promote and protect farms and open space.

The MALPF has a minimum acreage requirement of 100 acres, unless the farm is contiguous with an existing agricultural easement. Open crop land must contain a minimum of 50 percent prime and productive soils; the requirements for woodlands are not as stringent. The MET easements have a minimum requirement of 20 acres, and can protect properties that have significance in terms of their visual qualities, scenic features, wildlife habitat or historic sites in addition to farm and forest land. Recent trends indicate an increase in the number of MET easements countywide.

Two significant farms in Granite have been placed in agricultural easements through purchase by the MALPF. The Pahl farm, 130 acres, is located partially within the Granite NRHD while the Strohmer farm, 100 acres, is located about 1 mile to the north on Hernwood Road.

In conclusion, agriculture should continue to be the preferred land use throughout the study area, particularly within the RC 2 zone. Conversion of agricultural land for residential development is highly undesirable and would undermine an industry that is an integral part of Baltimore County's economy.

RURAL CHARACTER

The preservation of rural character and the quality of life in the Patapsco/Granite area is a fundamental issue for this study. The area contains a mix of elements that define and contribute to the unique rural character of the area. They are listed as follows:

1. Scenic Views
2. Aesthetic Qualities
3. Recreational Opportunities
4. Agricultural Preservation
5. Conservation Areas
6. Historic Resources
7. Architectural Features
8. Rural Scale of Building
9. Rural Context
10. Rural Roads
11. Mix of Farm Fields and Forests
12. Patapsco River Valley, Ben's Run, Brice's Run, Dogwood Run and greenways
13. Quarries
14. Railroad

The area's rural character could be undermined by the following elements:

1. Suburban sprawl, i.e. rural residential development not in keeping with the character of the area.
2. Widening the rural roads.
3. Zoning that is too dense due to the environmental features and constraints of the area.
4. Quality of the public schools.
5. Contamination issues on the Nike bases and the Hernwood Landfill.
6. Extension of public sewer to the area.

In order to preserve rural character, Baltimore County should adopt policies which promote the area as a Rural Heritage Area. This would include agricultural and historic preservation, the protection of environmental resources, open space and the rural way of life. Additionally, this would also include strengthening the local public schools. Guidelines should be developed for new rural development, residential, commercial and institutional. This will achieve a better fit between the area's unique landscape features, scenic views and roads and any new development.

The vision for the Patapsco/Granite Community involves the continued protection of the area's scenic vistas, the environment and the rural way of life with an emphasis on agricultural preservation. Therefore, the area has merit for consideration as a Rural Legacy Area.

OPEN SPACE

In May 1991, the Baltimore County Council adopted the Patapsco Park and Open Space Plan. The plan made recommendations for a portion of the study area, a 2100 acre area bounded by Windsor Mill Road, Fairbrook Road, Johnnycake Road, and Old Court Road. The primary feature of this plan was a greenway concept along Ben's Run, Brice's Run, and Dogwood Run. This concept is very important to the Patapsco/Granite plan. Within the larger 11,979 acre Patapsco/Granite study area, these major greenway systems form a spine for the overall open space network which includes Ben's Run and Brice's Run, tributaries to the Patapsco River, and Dogwood Run, a tributary to Ben's Run, and the Patapsco greenway. (See Map 6 A.)

The Patapsco greenway is undergoing a major master planning effort by an inter-jurisdictional committee. The committee involves the Maryland State Department of Natural Resources, the Maryland Historic Trust, Baltimore County, Howard County and numerous private organizations such as the Ellicott County Restoration Foundation, Historic Ellicott City as well as numerous community associations. While the initial planning area is narrow in scope, from Union Dam to Relay and Elkridge, the potential exists to extend the greenway to the north through the study area through the Patapsco State Park to Carroll County. This could be a regional greenway extending from Carroll County to Anne Arundel County and linking to the Baltimore Washington International trail and the Baltimore and Annapolis trail. (See Map 6 B.)

In addition to the previously mentioned greenways, Granite Run and Mardella Run offer the potential for greenways as well. There is also the potential to connect the Granite/ Patapsco area greenways to the Fairbrook area to the east and the Owings Mill area to the north. (See Map 6 B.)

Greenways are acquired through in-fee dedications as development occurs, and by means of an active easement program for pedestrian access. Although primarily associated with the stream valleys, 100 year flood plain and buffer areas, the greenways will by necessity also utilize land bridge connections at certain ridge top locations. The greenways are envisioned to be a hierarchy of trails that would link other recreational amenities while protecting water quality and providing wildlife corridors.

The Department of Recreation and Parks will work with the Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management (DEPRM) in a joint evaluation of existing and proposed trails to address the appropriateness of trails for recreational use and environmental impact. Department of Recreation and Parks has developed a system to categorize trails as: 1) high intensity, 2) medium intensity and 3) low intensity trails. The first type of trail is hard surfaced, bituminous, or concrete and is handicapped accessible as well as for parents with small children

Map 6A Greenways and Recreation Sites



Map 6B Regional Greenways and Trail Connections



and strollers. Walkers, bicycles and joggers all can utilize this type of trail. The second type of trail is constructed from crushed stone or stone dust and allows for some bicycle use, jogging, hiking, and horseback riding while allowing for fairly efficient wheelchair use. The third type can be developed with little or no disturbance to the natural environment. There is an initial clearing of vegetation that blocks the trail and periodic trail maintenance. This type of trail is challenging and is for the serious hiker who can handle segments that may be steep and narrow. It is foreseen that the majority of the trails within the study area will be in this low intensity category.

A portion of the Patapsco Valley State Park is located within the Patapsco/Granite Community Plan area. Offering a variety of recreational facilities and trails, the park allows for activities such as horseback riding, hiking, bicycle riding, nature study and camping.

Another open space issue involves open space opportunity sites, the former Hernwood landfill and the former Nike sites, all located on Hernwood Road and zoned RC 2. There have been long-standing issues concerning contamination of these sites which should be thoroughly evaluated by the Maryland Department of the Environment. Several of the cells at the Hernwood landfill have been capped and are utilized by model airplane enthusiasts at present. The northern portion of the landfill is anticipated to be capped in 1998. A reclamation plan and a plan for re-use should be developed as a joint effort between the Office of Planning, the Department of Recreation and Parks, the Department of Public Works and the community.

The Nike sites are located on the east and west sides of Hernwood Road in proximity to existing residential development. It is desirable to re-use these sites for a community center use which would include meeting rooms, an area that could be rented for receptions and indoor /outdoor recreational facilities. At the present time, the community has no dedicated meeting space for Scout groups and community planning groups. A concept plan should be developed for re-use as a partnership effort with the Office of Planning, the Department of Recreation and Parks and the community. An environmental assessment of the properties should be conducted to insure that there is no site contamination or environmental hazard.

Finally, a major open space opportunity, the 18 hole expansion of the Diamond Ridge Golf Course will be completed in Spring 1998. The "Woodlands" will be a 7,000 yard complement to the existing 6,525 yard course. This brings the total acreage of the Western Area Park, including the golf course to 371.5 acres.

TRANSPORTATION

A review of the transportation issues facing the Patapsco/Granite area reveals that future traffic congestion and safety concerns are more likely to be influenced by external development pressures rather than development within the study area. Traffic volumes on the main arterial within the study area have not reached capacity levels. Furthermore, these roads are not projected to reach capacity levels by 2010. The resource conservation zoning and rural nature of the study

area also precludes traffic generation on side streets from reaching capacity. It is unlikely that traffic volumes will rise to a level where unacceptable travel delays would occur within the study area. A more likely scenario is that as traffic volumes increase, some spot safety improvements might be needed to address individual problems.

Old Court Road (MD 125) and to some extent Marriottsville Road are likely to experience significant increases in traffic volumes over the next ten years. These increases will be caused primarily by growth in the Owings Mills Town Center and the Waverly Woods development in Howard County. At some point the geometric condition of the roadways through Granite will begin to act as a traffic calming device, and will discourage a certain amount of vehicular travel. Thus, the geometrics in conjunction with a reduction of zoning potential within the study area are probably the best way to manage potential traffic problems. To improve roadway geometrics for reasons other than public safety will only encourage more outside traffic to travel through Granite. As traffic volumes increase and as issues arise, the Bureau of Traffic Engineering and Transportation Planning (BTETP), will work closely with the community to resolve any future problems.

At the request of the Greater Patapsco Community Association, the BTETP has reviewed several issues involving sight distance obstructions and safety concerns. The following actions or evaluations have been made:

1. A remnant of a concrete wall adjacent to the southbound lane of Old Court Road, south of Inwood Road will be reviewed by the Bureau of Highways for possible removal if it is within the county right-of-way.
2. A sight distance survey at Windsor Mill Road and Old Court Road and accident data for the past five years indicates that the sight distance meets minimum criteria and the accident rate is not abnormally high. While there are problems with entering or crossing Old Court Road from Windsor Mill Road, particularly at peak times, delays and waiting for appropriate gaps in traffic is not at the level of severity that changes are necessary at this time.
3. An engineering evaluation is needed for potential solutions to the sight distance problems at Old Court Road and Ridge Road. Relocation of the roadways may be needed to create an acceptable intersection.
4. The SHA is evaluating the embankment on the south side of Old Court Road at Dogwood Road that is creating a sight distance problem.
5. The Highway Design Section is reviewing the sight distance obstruction caused by the bridge on Dogwood Road west of Hollifield Road.
6. The Developers Plans Review Division is reviewing the issue of visibility problems of potential access points along the Chew property's frontage (9300 block Old Court Road).

SCHOOLS

In a study of school aged children, conducted by the Greater Patapsco Community Association, one hundred and four attend private schools, ninety six attend public schools while thirty are home schooled. There are five elementary school districts within the study area. They are as follows: Winfield, Hernwood, Randallstown, Featherbed Lane and Chadwick Elementary Schools.

According to the Board of Education 1996 enrollment numbers, there are seventy-four elementary school aged children within the study area attending a total of 10 different public elementary schools. While the majority attends Hernwood Elementary School, others have received permission to attend outside of their district with special approval due to job or day care provider location.

As for middle schools, area students primarily attend Deer Park Middle and secondarily, Old Court Middle. Randallstown High School serves the high school population.

School district boundaries have not been changed for many years. They should be re-evaluated in light of the great advantages to making school district boundary changes that would result in all of the Patapsco/Granite Area being located within the Northwest area. This would promote community identity and cohesiveness while being more effective from a school management point of view.

The quality of public school education is an important issue for this community as it is for communities countywide. The Board of Education has undertaken a series of actions to improve the quality of education. They have instituted programmatic changes in an effort to link the local essential curriculum to state curriculum, better preparing students for language and reading skills and the MSAP tests. A mentoring program for novice teachers with less than five years experience has been established. A Middle School study committee is developing a proposal for the construction of a new middle school in the northwest area. Also, there are plans for Randallstown High School to become a magnet school, one of only ten magnets countywide.

While continued improvements to the public schools are important, other alternatives such as charter schools and shared public school resources with home schools should also be explored. The Board of Education should consider developing guidelines for charter schools. It should be noted that existing parochial or private schools do not qualify as charter schools. Lastly, a major change in school policy would be needed in order to allow home schooled children to attend public schools for some classes like gym, art or music.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Police Department statistics indicate 1780 calls for service in the plan area during 1996. Only 263 or 14.8 % of those calls were for criminal matters. To put these numbers in perspective, countywide, there were a total of 469,058 calls during that time period with 2.5% of the calls in Precinct 2. The types of calls with comparatively high numbers are faulty residential alarms and requests to check location for suspicious activities.

There is continued concern about repeated illegal dumping of construction and other debris in the community. A Police Department spokesperson suggested writing down the tag number of the vehicle. However, all too often the dumping occurs at night or is unobserved. There is one patrol car serving the study area. If necessary, a car from the Garrison precinct can assist in providing service. A total of twelve patrol cars service a 40 square mile area from Liberty Road to the Route 40 West corridor and from the Baltimore City line to the Howard County line.

Lastly, there is a very active Citizens on Patrol within the plan area. The residents in the study area can be characterized as very watchful and observant, which helps in community policing and crime prevention.